

December 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

As per my previous letter prior to the Christmas break, I'm writing to you with the most up to date information we have about the start of term next week as well as the introduction of rapid testing in schools.

As you are aware, our school already has robust procedures in place to mitigate the risk of transmission and to ensure your child's education can continue successfully. **In accordance with government guidance for schools, we will also now begin to offer rapid testing for students and staff.**

Alongside the other protective measures we have in place, these tests will help staff and students to remain in school safely. Government advice states that up to one third of people who have coronavirus experience no symptoms. School based testing will further reduce the risk of transmission and help to keep our school open as safely as possible. **The test is voluntary, but I would encourage everyone to participate.**

We will be testing all staff and students who wish to participate from the week commencing 4th January 2021. However, as I'm sure you can understand, it will take a few days for the testing kits and training to be in place, and therefore, **testing schedules will be published as soon as possible – please check our website/social media pages regularly for updates.**

Below I have outlined the timeline for students' return to school:

- **Monday 4th January:** will be an INSET day with the school closed to all students.
- **Tuesday 5th – Friday 8th January:** School will be open to students identified as vulnerable or children of critical/key worker families only. These students should attend school as normal (8.45am start, 3pm finish) via their usual allocated entrance. ALL of these places are now full.

Details of testing schedules for all students will also be published during this week. Please note that **consent forms must be completed and returned before the testing programme can begin.**

- **All other students in Years 7-11 will begin lessons online via their Google classroom:** Students should access their timetabled lessons for each day as they would in school. Lessons will continue to follow the usual curriculum; student engagement with these lessons is vital to ensure their learning continues.
- **Monday 11th January:** School opens to Y11 students (8.45am start, 3pm finish) via their usual allocated entrance. Rapid testing begins for all students as per pre-published schedules. All other students in Years 7-10 will continue their lessons online via their Google classroom.
- **Monday 18th January:** School opens to Y7-10 students (8.45am start, 3pm finish) via their usual allocated entrance.

Please also follow the link on our website: 'Parents' Guide to Rapid Testing', to read an instructional leaflet with some more information regarding the rapid testing.

If you are happy for your child to be tested, please fill in the registration and consent form at the end of this letter (one per student) and return it to the school office via email - admin@winterhill.org.uk by Wednesday, 6th January 2021.

Those taking the test will be supervised by trained staff. The 'lateral flow' tests are quick and easy using a swab of your nose and throat. For under 18s, staff can oversee the swab process.

Results (which take around half an hour from testing) will be shared directly with staff and students participating. Where participants are under 16, parents/carers or legal guardians will also be informed.

Government advice suggests that these tests work - in validated studies conducted by Oxford University and Public Health England, they were shown to be as accurate in identifying a case as a PCR test (99.68% specificity). The tests have lower sensitivity, but they are better at picking up cases when a person has higher viral load, hence the need to test frequently.

Testing will be offered free of charge.

Please also read the information below which will answer some of the questions you will undoubtedly have:

What if a student tests positive?

Participating staff and students who test positive will be informed about their results individually. Where participants are under 16, parents/carers or legal guardians will also be notified. Guidance on safe travel and additional precautions will be provided along with test results.

Students will need to take a further 'PCR test' (similar to those done in local and regional testing sites) on the same day (or as soon as possible). School will be able to provide these PCR test kits to perform at home or you can go to www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test or call 119 to book a follow-up test. If ordering a PCR test yourselves, you should choose to visit a drive-through test site if possible, as it is faster than requesting a home test.

During this time, while they wait for the PCR result (via text / email), they will need to self-isolate. If the PCR test returns a positive result you will have to self-isolate and follow the guidance from NHS Test and Trace.

What happens if the test is negative?

They will be able to stay in school and resume their activities as normal. A student will only be told if they test positive on a 'lateral flow' test, so if you do not hear you can assume it was negative. A small number of students may need to repeat the test if the first test was invalid or void for some reason.

What if a close contact at school tests positive?

A close contact of someone in school who has tested positive for COVID-19 will be able to return to school if they agree to be tested once a day for 7 days and the test is negative. If they do not want to take the test, they will need to self-isolate as per the national guidelines. This does not apply to household members or close contacts outside of school who will still need to self-isolate. Further details will be provided at the time, but if you would prefer to self-isolate instead of doing daily testing, you can.

What if my child develops symptoms?

This testing programme at school is for people with no symptoms. If your child develops symptoms at any time (such as a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) they must immediately self-isolate, and book a test by calling 119 (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or 0300 303 2713 (Scotland) or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

Of course, we will support our staff and students throughout, but please contact us if you need this information in any other language or format or if you have any questions. You can call the school on 01709 740232 or email admin@winterhill.org.uk.

Please find the registration and consent form for rapid testing enclosed below.

Yours faithfully,



Headteacher

COVID-19 Rapid Testing Registration Form

To process the test, we will register all participating students. To complete this registration, please fill in the form below for your child, and complete the enclosed consent statement.

First Name	
Last Name	
Date of Birth DD/MM/YY	
Gender at birth	
Currently showing any COVID-19 symptoms?	
Today's date	
Home Postcode	
Email Address	
Mobile Number	

NHS Test and Trace **consent form** for COVID-19 testing

Please complete and return this consent form for your child to take part in the asymptomatic coronavirus testing.

- **For students younger than 16 years** - this form must be completed by the parent or legal guardian. Please complete one consent form for each child you wish to enrol.

- **Students over 16** can complete this form themselves, having discussed participation with their parent / guardian if under 18.

1. I have had the opportunity to consider the information provided by the school about the testing, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily, based on the information presented in the letter dated [DD/MM/YYYY].

2. I have discussed the testing with my child and my child is happy to participate. If on the day of testing they do not wish to take part, then they will not be made to do so and consent can be withdrawn at any time ahead of the test.

3. I consent to my child having a nose and throat swab for a lateral flow test.

4. I consent that my child's samples will be tested for the presence of COVID-19.

5. I understand that if my child results are negative on the lateral flow test I will not be contacted by the school except where they/you are a close contact of a confirmed positive.

6. If the lateral flow test indicates the presence of COVID-19, I consent to my child having a nose and throat swab for confirmatory PCR testing, which shall be sent the same day to an NHS Test & Trace laboratory.

7. I consent that they will need to self-isolate following a positive lateral flow test result, until the results of the confirmatory PCR have been received.

8. I agree that if my child's test results are confirmed to be positive from this PCR test, I will report this to the school and I understand that my child will be required to self-isolate following public health advice.

9. I consent, that if a close contact of my child tests positive but my child has tested negative, they will continue to attend school but will be tested every day at school for 7 days.

Name of pupil/student/staff to be tested (print)	
Year group (if applicable)	
Name of parent or guardian (print)	
Signature	
Date	
Relationship to child	